

# Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

## What is a TBI?

A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) happens when a bump, blow, or jolt to the head disrupts how the brain works. TBIs range from mild (concussion) to severe.

## Common symptoms

### Physical

- Headaches
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Fatigue
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Sleep problems

### Thinking & Memory

- Trouble concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Slower processing speed
- Difficulty finding words

### Emotional & Behavioral

- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Anxiety or depression
- Feeling overwhelmed easily

## Seek immediate medical care if there is:

- Worsening headache
- Repeated vomiting
- Seizures
- Slurred speech
- Increasing confusion
- Unusual behavior



## Living well with a TBI

### 1. Pace Yourself

- Plan rest breaks.
- Break large tasks into smaller steps.
- Allow extra time for activities.

### 2. Build Structure

- Keep a consistent daily routine.
- Use planners, calendars, or phone reminders.
- Keep important items in the same place.

### 3. Support Your Brain

- Prioritize sleep (7–9 hours).
- Stay hydrated and eat balanced meals.
- Exercise as approved by your provider.
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs.

### 4. Manage Emotions

- Practice deep breathing or mindfulness.
- Consider counseling or support groups.
- Communicate your needs clearly.

### 5. Use Your Support Team

Recovery may involve:

- Primary care provider
- Neurologist
- Occupational therapist
- Physical therapist
- Speech-language pathologist
- Mental health professional

For education and support resources, visit the Brain Injury Association of America

## Preventing future TBIs

A second brain injury can be more serious. Protect your brain.

### At Home

- Remove tripping hazards.
- Install grab bars if needed.
- Improve lighting.
- Wear non-slip footwear.

### In the Car

- Always wear a seatbelt.
- Use proper child safety seats.
- Never drive under the influence.

### Sports & Recreation

- Wear protective gear.
- Follow return-to-play guidelines.
- Never ignore concussion symptoms.

### At Work

- Wear required helmets.
- Follow safety protocols.
- Report hazards promptly

## Recovery takes time

- Healing is not always linear.
- Good days and harder days are normal.
- Improvement can continue for months or longer.
- Celebrate small progress.

## You are not alone

With the right tools, support, and prevention strategies, many people live full and meaningful lives after TBI.



## Contact us if you have any questions

If you continue to have symptoms after a concussion, dedicated rehabilitation therapy can help speed up the recovery. The **Sentara Concussion Clinic** is here to help. To schedule an appointment call **757 388-1457**.

**Brain Injury Association of America**

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